

# Interview With GEN Benjamin S. Griffin, Commanding General, U.S. Army Materiel Command

Michael J. Varhola

**O**n Nov. 28, 2005, GEN Benjamin S. Griffin, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC), spoke with *Army AL&T* Magazine about the ever-evolving task of providing logistical support to American warfighters around the world.

AMC Commanding General GEN Benjamin S. Griffin discusses how the Life Cycle Management Command and Army Field Support Brigade structure will provide better logistics and maintenance support to a modular Army Nov. 28, 2005, at AMC HQ, Fort Belvoir, VA. (U.S. Army photo by Cindy Hermes.)

**AL&T:** As the Army transforms, AMC has been a leading change agent in spiraling technology to the Current Force. How have the Life Cycle Management Commands (LCMCs) helped to facilitate change while also meeting the Army's transformation initiatives and requirements?

**Griffin:** We've implemented several initiatives that seek to provide "cradle-to-grave" capabilities support and to establish a single interface between AMC and our customers. One initiative was the establishment, in December 2004, of the first Army Field Support Brigades [AFSBs]. We now have seven field support brigades: in Iraq; Kuwait; Korea; Europe; Fort Lewis, WA, focused on the Pacific other than Korea and Japan; Fort Bragg, NC, focused on the East Coast; and one at Fort Hood, TX, focused on the West Coast.

These are our links to the commanders in the field — Active, Guard and Reserve — and are focused on the division, brigade and battalion chains of command. The AFSBs provide a single face for AMC to the commanders and units that we support. On a weekly basis, we receive feedback from these Field Support Brigades. Then, using the LCMC construct, the research, development and engineering centers, program executive officers [PEOs] and program managers [PMs], and logistics maintenance commands work together through the three LCMCs: U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command [TACOM], U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command [AMCOM] and U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command [CECOM]. We're now in the process of moving to a Chemical Materials Agency LCMC and, in the future, I'd like to establish an Ammunition LCMC as well.

From the information provided to the LCMCs, we can apply cradle-to-grave



Organizational maintenance is continually evolving as the nature of warfare and combat changes. Contract maintenance support is embedded down to the unit level to ensure that Soldiers' equipment and weapon systems are ready to go when and wherever they are needed. Here, a Soldier from the 3rd Infantry Division provides checkpoint security from an M3A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle near Tikrit, Iraq, in June 2005. (U.S. Army photo by Matthew Acosta.)

materiel solutions and support to our warfighters. Feedback indicates that the LCMC concept has been very effective at improving our responsiveness and support to the field. We learn from and improve upon the process every day, but I think having the LCMCs has forged much stronger links to the warfighter and has enabled us to do a much better job of supporting not only Army forces, but the entire joint team that we have been asked to support. As a division commander, I felt this cradle-to-grave support was severely lacking — we now have a fix in place, but much work still needs to be done.

**AL&T:** What benchmarks or metrics does AMC use to determine if combatant commanders and their Soldiers are satisfied with the level of logistics support they receive in the field?

**Griffin:** The best benchmark I know is the direct feedback we receive from commanders and Soldiers in the field. Whether they are in a combat zone or resetting from redeployment back from theater in Korea,

Germany, Hawaii, Alaska, stateside, Iraq, Afghanistan or Kuwait, the firsthand feedback we get through the AFSBs is the best metric. However, there are certain things we can measure from a readiness standpoint using reportable metrics: readiness levels, equipment fill levels and equipment modernization levels. Another thing we do is to determine how long it takes us — once we have finished a product, whether it's in the depot or

The LCMCs are a work in progress, and I will never be satisfied until we've met all the Army's needs in a timely fashion. We get better at it, but it's a constant attempt to improve upon our responsiveness to the units in the field.

whether it's something we've procured from the private sector — to get it out that last tactical mile to the end user. This includes engineering support, repair parts and end items. How long does it take from the time we fixed it to when we get it back to the user? How much equipment can we repair forward? As you know, turnaround time is critical for equipment repair. Likewise, sending engineering teams forward or designing and actually building materiel solutions to fix problems in theater

are the kinds of things our commanders must weigh in on.

So again, it's that direct feedback that I and the other seven major subordinate



Contract maintenance logistics support, LOGCAP and performance-based logistics teaming have kept the aviation community up and flying despite extremely high operations tempo in Iraq and Afghanistan. Here, an AH-64 Apache helicopter returns to Camp Taji, Iraq, after providing close air support to ground troops fighting the insurgency. (U.S. Air Force photo by TSGT Russell Cooley IV.)

command [MSC] commanders get on a weekly basis. And we're able to get that feedback — focusing on the top 5 to 10 issues that commanders are having in the field — directly back to the teams that deliver the materiel solutions. We zero in on parts shortages, look at downtime for systems, look at where we are in up-armoring or fielding systems and look at how agile we are with the Rapid Fielding Initiative to get the equipment into the hands of users. This combination is what we use on a continuous basis to get feedback from the commanders in the field. Again, remembering who our customers are, keeping the lines of communication open and doing the quality control.

The other piece is getting out of the headquarters and visiting units in the field. There is no substitute for hearing firsthand from the chain of command. This includes units in the field — regardless of the service — as well as in the depots, ammo plants and our partners in the private sector. We get tremendous support from private industry. That includes everybody who's involved in getting the warfighter what he or she needs. And when I say "warfighter," I'm talking about all MOSs [military occupational specialties], not just the infantry, armor, artillery and aviation branches. I'm talking about all branches and services.

The LCMCs are a work in progress, and I will never be satisfied until we've met all the Army's needs in a timely

fashion. We get better at it, but it's a constant attempt to improve upon our responsiveness to the units in the field. Generally speaking, we've gotten very good comments from commanders since the formation of the LCMCs. The link that we've forged to the field

today from the AFSBs — which includes our uniformed and civilian logisticians on the ground, including the logistics assistance reps, the logistics assistance officers, AFSB commanders, as well as feedback to the PMs, PEOs and the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command — again, using the LCMC concept, really allows us to pull that unsurpassed logistics support together. So I'd say "yes," the feedback's been very good. We're not there yet, it's a constant challenge to reach out and make sure we're getting feedback from the Active, Guard and Reserve Components — the total force — as well as the support we provide to the other services.

The LCMC concept, in my estimation, works extremely well. It has brought key systems and processes together, whether it's a new or an old system. It gives us the cradle-to-grave concept. And whether it's new or old, it will plug into one of our LCMCs. It's given us more clarity with respect to which command is responsible for tracking the system and the field's requirements. And, as we field commercial-off-the-shelf [COTS] systems — which we tend to do more and more — it's very important that we can take that COTS piece of equipment and

plug it into one of the LCMCs to provide the follow-on logistics support and maintenance, including spares and parts.

**AL&T:** As AMC moves forward to support a modular Army, will there be more reliance on contracted logistics and maintenance support and why?

**Griffin:** If you look at contract maintenance today — in theater, here at home or overseas in Europe or the Pacific — you very quickly see that we are integrated with respect to what I call "organizational maintenance," maintenance above the organization level, logistics support and contract support. Contract support is embedded down at the unit level, and all the way up into the depots, ammo plants and the private sector — which we reach out to for support and receive help from. And that's overseas as well as in CONUS.



During a visit to Anniston Army Depot, AL, GEN Griffin observes Paul Barber (middle) and Terry Grissom, small arms repairers, test fire an M2 .50 caliber machine gun. Every weapon that is worked on in the depot's Small Arms facility is test fired to ensure that each one is ready for use by America's military forces. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of AMC.)

We will support the modular force by what I call the "meshing" of the institutional and operational force as we go down the road. And that's not only at AMC, but also in other aspects of the institutional, as well as the operational, Army. Contract maintenance logistics support is a key part of that. The Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) is an example as well. But much broader than LOGCAP is the work of the private sector teaming with us today. We use the phrase "performance-based



While touring the Small Arms Service Center Maintenance Shop at Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, GEN Griffin speaks with Mike Peterson, site lead for the Common Remotely Operated Weapons Station. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of AMC.)

trying to remove as much bureaucracy as we can, looking at the layering that we have and reducing, where we can, any kind of obstacles to make the entire acquisition and maintenance process faster, more efficient and more economical. By more efficient, I mean with respect to how quickly we can turn a piece of equipment around and fix it, ensuring that we're fixing it to the right standard and doing this as cost-effectively as we can. This is not unique to the Army. Our sister services are moving along the same path and we are learning from them.

**AL&T:** How is AMC's Logistics Modernization Program (LMP) helping to improve Soldier operations tempo while also reducing the overall maintenance and sustainability burden in the theater of operations?

**Griffin:** The LMP concept provides us a tool, an automated base, if you will, to do better tracking. Whether it's ordering parts, getting the right part to the right place, whether it's tracking inventory, the amount of inventory you're carrying, inventory control — it's all wrapped up into what is being done all the way down to the work that's occurring inside the depot.

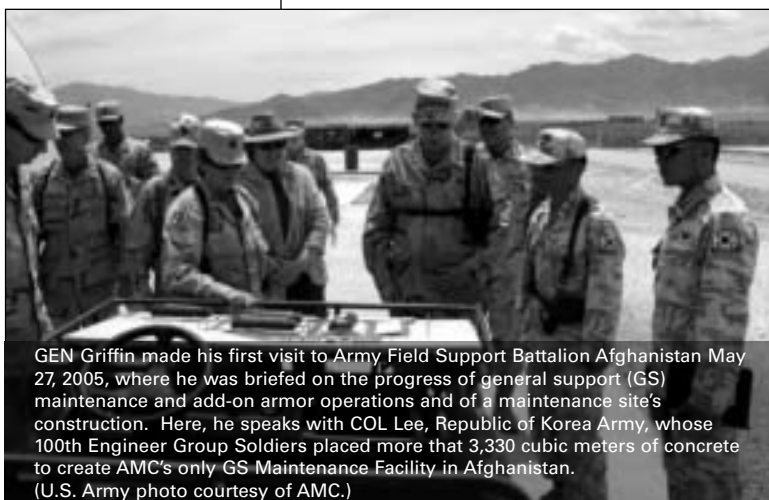
The biggest challenge I have is to get the right part, to the right place, at the right time. LMP is one of the tools

logistics," and we are doing a tremendous amount of teaming with the private sector in places like Fort Rucker, AL, Fort Bragg, Fort Hood, Fort Lewis and Fort Drum, NY, to name a few, as well as overseas locations. Contract support is critical to our efforts as we transform to the modular force. But this is not something new. It's something that's evolved over time. We can take expertise from the private sector, combine it with the government sector to include what our logistics units are doing, and we can do a much better job of faster equipment repair turnaround. Nowhere is that more evident than in the aviation community and what we've done over the years with aviation maintenance and logistics support, but this is not unique to aviation. It's also been incorporated into ground, fire control and other systems across the board. More and more performance-based logistics teaming with the private sector, and a combination of support from contractor as well as government personnel, is the future way to exploit the best practices of industry and business.

What we've done with the Stryker brigades, both overseas as well as in CONUS, is a very good example in how we've combined contract support

with organic elements. But it's certainly not isolated to the Stryker, it's across the board and in other weapon systems as well. We're doing a lot of contract work on the Bradleys, HEMTTs [Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks], HETs [Heavy Equipment Transporters] and HMMWVs [High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles]. It's a combination of what we're doing in depots, what we're doing with organizational maintenance and what we're doing with the private sector.

It gets into what we call "logistical force generation." When you want to reset the force and sustain the force over time, it becomes a combination of organic direct support and general support — what we have in the depots, what we're doing with contractors and what we're doing with original equipment manufacturers. It involves looking at what is the best combination thereof,



GEN Griffin made his first visit to Army Field Support Battalion Afghanistan May 27, 2005, where he was briefed on the progress of general support (GS) maintenance and add-on armor operations and of a maintenance site's construction. Here, he speaks with COL Lee, Republic of Korea Army, whose 100th Engineer Group Soldiers placed more than 3,330 cubic meters of concrete to create AMC's only GS Maintenance Facility in Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of AMC.)

that we envision as an enabler both in the workplace and at the depot, as well as all the way up to the LCMCs. Again, it gets at the resource allocation so that we can maximize the efficiency of the individual worker, ensure that the end items needed get there to be repaired and ensure that everything's in sync.

From a financial standpoint, like a checkbook, we need to be able to monitor inventory balance, what's ordered, what it's costing to do the work and streamline the process — online and in real time — so we're not doing it a day, two days or a week late. We can automatically go in and see where we are. We're not unlike the private sector in looking at how much inventory we're carrying, where that inventory is and if it's at the right place at the right time. Do we have the parts and spares there to get the equipment fixed, the workforce on-site, the equipment and everything set, so we can turn it around faster and back to the user? And LMP is one of those tools that we see making this happen. We've made significant progress toward deployment of LMP and our ability to become more efficient is heavily reliant upon automated systems like LMP.

**AL&T:** At the Senior Leaders and AMC Commanders Conference in August, you noted that the Special Operations community is doing a great job of identifying requirements and getting materiel to the field. You attributed their success in part to the critical role non-commissioned officers (NCOs) play in the requirement/solution identification,

maintenance and sustainability process. What is AMC doing to strengthen the role of NCOs in its logistics, maintenance and sustainment processes? How can other units and organizations help themselves?

**Griffin:** The point I was trying to make is that you must look at any requirement from the perspective of the warfighter in the field — whether it's engineering, research and development or production — and get it turned around and back in the hands of the people in the field who need it, streamline that process and have it

requirements and keep the link down with the end user. Again, it's the design and structure of the AFSBs that can and will make a big difference for our Soldiers.

I've also asked Command Sergeant Major [CSM] Daniel K. Elder — we've got a tremendous group of CSMs here at AMC — to try to improve the link we have with end users via the NCO network to bring forward good ideas on how to improve upon what we're doing in the field and the products we provide. Then, allowing units in the field more involvement in finding solutions so they

can communicate better with us. It's our responsibility to open up better lines of communication. We must go back and ensure that we are, in fact, meeting the units' needs. "Quality control systems" will ensure that we are meeting the needs of the entire chain of command better by using the NCO chain. CSM Elder has aggressively taken this on and we are seeing progress through our feedback mechanisms.

But I know the CSMs out at the MSCs are doing the same thing, whether it's in aviation, research and development, tank-automotive or communications-electronics.

We are seeing some significant changes in that feedback and, again, we are trying to do a better job of keeping the end user in the loop, whether it's in small arms, weapons, ammunition, uniforms, rations, aircraft — you name it. This is just another challenge we must continually stay on top of so we can better meet our customer's needs. It's a challenge we face every day in accomplishing our mission.



Performance-based logistics means many things to different people, but to combat commanders and Soldiers on the front lines, it means having enough fuel and ammunition to operate their vehicles and weapon systems to take the global war on terrorism to the enemy's doorstep. (U.S. Army photo.)

linked to the end user or warfighter — this is how we better meet the requirements of our customers and how we involve them in the feedback process.

I think Special Operations Forces [SOF] do a tremendous job in this area — linking the person who has a requirement and keeping that person in the loop. So I've challenged our people to do a better job by looking at how they [SOF] do business and rapidly turn around

I know we do not have all the answers, and we know how critical customer and Soldier feedback is.

**AL&T:** The combined U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC)/TACOM community responded with real-world solutions and timely support — water purification, auxiliary power generation and fuel tankers, just to name a few — when natural disasters (Hurricanes Katrina and Rita) struck Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. This integrated response helped save lives and lessen human suffering. This is a tremendous story that needs to be told to *Army AL&T* Magazine's more than 48,000 readers, the Army at large and the American people. What is the story you would like us to tell and how would you like us to emphasize it to our internal and external audiences?

**Griffin:** Here are just a couple of examples:

- The TACOM LCMC, like the other MSCs, provided support to disaster relief operations throughout America's Gulf Coast region by delivering 5,000-gallon fuel tankers, rough-terrain forklifts, container handlers and a variety of materiel handling equipment to some units — for example, the 1st Cavalry Division. Likewise, we provided liaison personnel to both the 1st Cavalry Division and the 82nd Airborne Division.
- TARDEC generated hundreds of thousands of gallons of drinking water for those affected by Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and Louisiana by providing purification equipment.
- The Red River Army Depot sent 100 Humvees to National Guard units for humanitarian, security, safety, supply and rescue missions, including moving injured and disabled citizens to safer areas.

**In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, AMC responded by sending 100 Humvees to National Guard units providing humanitarian relief and security to storm-ravaged communities in Mississippi and Louisiana. Here, National Guardsmen patrol downtown New Orleans searching for and rescuing survivors Sept. 14, 2005. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Jacob N. Bailey.)**



- We deployed some logistics contracting specialists out of Rock Island, IL, the Army Field Support Command, in case that level of expertise was needed.
- We put some folks on LTG Russel L. Honoré's team early on. We activated, through our operations center, a response/crisis action team, to ensure an enduring capability to support additional requirements. We also provided limited command and control systems to some deploying units.
- We worked with private industry doing critical work for the military from a facility in the New Orleans area to see if there was anything we could do to help sustain their support to the war in Iraq and to mitigate the effects of the hurricane on their operation. This is an area we must be prepared to support in future emergencies.
- AMCOM is now working to mitigate the effects of the many flight hours experienced by helicopters committed to around-the-clock operations during support to the hurricane relief and recovery operations.

We learned a great deal during this process on how we can provide better support in the future — both to relief workers and our industrial partners. Capturing lessons learned, we will build upon this experience to provide even better support if and when these situations occur again. We were fortunate to have in place command and control as well as logistics and maintenance systems that enabled us to respond rapidly when asked — and we used the LCMCs to focus our efforts. These lessons, and our subsequent improvements, will enable us to do even more when called upon in the future.

---

**MICHAEL J. VARHOLA** is the Web Editor with BRTRC's Technology Marketing Group providing contract support to *Army AL&T* Magazine and the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center. He has a B.S. in journalism from the University of Maryland and experience as a U.S. Army infantryman and civil affairs specialist.